*(The following is a sample of a church Constitution and Bylaws. This can be revised and fitted to any local church's need/situation.)*

# CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

Constitution and Bylaws of *(name of church, city state)*

## Preamble

This Constitution and Bylaws are made to:

1. Preserve and secure the principles of our faith.
2. Preserve the liberties of each individual member of the church.
3. Ensure freedom of action of independence from any religious body or organization.
4. Provide for orderly conduct of internal affairs, in dealing with others, and of governing church members.

## I. Name

The name of this church shall be _____. It shall be affiliated with the _____ Baptist Association, the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

## II. Business Location

The address of the principal office of this church shall be: _____.

## III. Purpose

The purposes of *(name of church)* are:

1. To worship God, who is worthy of all praise and glory.
2. To serve God locally, nationally, and internationally by fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ as set forth in Matthew 28:19-20.
3. To minister to the needs of the members and others as the church is able to do so.
4. To do any and all things related to and in connection with the carrying out of the purposes of a New Testament Church.

## IV. Articles of Faith

1. We believe the Holy Bible as the inspired Word of God, without any error, the all-sufficient authority in matters of faith, doctrine, and Christian living.

2. We believe in one God, eternally existing in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
3. We believe in the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ, and that He is true God and man. He died on the cross for our sins. He rose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven where He sits at the right hand of the Father and is now our High Priest and Advocate.
4. We believe that man was created in the image of God but fell into sin and is, therefore, lost. Only through regeneration by the work of the Holy Spirit can man's salvation and spiritual life be obtained.
5. We believe that eternal salvation is the free gift of God, entirely apart from man's works, and is possessed by any and all who have faith in and receive Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.
6. We believe in a regenerated church membership: that is, persons old enough to understand their need for Jesus Christ and, of their own free will, accepted Him as their personal Lord and Savior.
7. We believe that baptism is by immersion and the Lord's Supper is a memorial to His suffering and death on the cross. These are ordinances to be observed by the church in its present age. They are, however, not to be regarded as means for man's salvation.
8. We believe in the personal, bodily, imminent, and glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ and that His second coming inspires believers for dynamic and zealous life and service for Him while waiting for His return.
9. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead, the everlasting blessedness of the saved in heaven, and the everlasting punishment and separation from God of the unsaved in hell.
10. We believe in the autonomy of the local church. The church shall manage its own affairs and shall not be subject to any other religious body or organization.
11. We subscribe to the "Baptist Faith and Message" adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention as our larger statement of faith with scriptural references.

V. Government

The government of *(name of church)* is vested in its members. The membership retains unto itself the right of exclusive self-government in all phases of its life and organization. It recognizes the needs for mutual counsel and cooperation, which are common among Baptist churches. This church will cooperate with and mutually work with _____ Baptist Association, Arkansas Baptist State Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

VI. Non-profit Status and Liquidation

This church is not organized for profit. In the event of liquidation or dissolution of the church, all of its assets and property of every nature and description whatsoever shall be paid over and transferred at the direction of the trustees to the _____Baptist Association, the Arkansas Baptist State Convention or both.

VII. Amendment

This Constitution and Bylaws may be amended provided the proposed amendment shall have been presented in writing at a regular church business meeting and then circulated to the membership. Amendments to this Constitution and Bylaws shall be two-thirds vote of members of the church who are qualified to vote and are present in the business meeting with a quorum to discuss and vote for this matter.

## BYLAWS

I. Church Membership

A. Qualifications

Membership of *(name of church)* shall consist of people having made a profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and who, having been scripturally baptized by immersion, are in agreement with the Articles of Faith.

B. Reception

Membership in the church may be attained by majority vote of the church in any of its regular business meetings and in one of the following manners:

1. By scriptural baptism by immersion after profession of faith in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior.
2. By transfer of church letter from another Baptist church.
3. By a statement of faith of their prior experience of conversion and scriptural baptism by immersion in another evangelical church of like faith and practice.
4. By restoration to the church membership after having been dropped.

C. Termination

Membership in this church shall be terminated when a member:

1. Requests a letter of transfer to join another Baptist church.
2. Is dropped from the roll of membership when he or she joins another kind of church. A letter of transfer is not necessary.
3. The member dies.
4. Is dismissed by a vote of the church due to reasons and circumstances provided in Section VII. Church Discipline. The pastor and deacons will do all they can to counsel the member for restoration prior to action of dismissal or a request of the member to be dismissed from the church membership.

D. Orientation of New Members

Candidates for membership and new members need to attend a Church Membership Class to learn and understand the privileges and responsibilities of belonging to the Lord's church.

1. Members in good standing shall have the right to a voice and vote in all church transactions and shall have the right and privileges to full participation in the life and work of the church.
2. It shall be the duty of church members to uphold the Articles of Faith, Constitution and Bylaws.

II. Church Officers

All church officers must be members of the church in good standing.

A. The Pastor:

1. The qualifications for pastor shall be consistent with those listed in I Timothy 3:1-7. His training, skills, and experiences are needed in this area of leadership.
2. His responsibilities:
   a) These generally fall into the following areas: preaching, teaching, pastoral counseling, administration, planning, and guiding the church to grow and fulfill its purposes.
   b) He shall lead the church, the organizations, and all leaders of the church in performing their tasks in worship, proclamation, education, and evangelism.
   c) The pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all church standing committees, except the Pastor's Selection Committee.
   d) He shall assist the deacons in securing pulpit supply for times in his absence.
3. Call
   a) A pastor shall be chosen and called whenever a vacancy occurs.
   b) A Pastor's Selection Committee shall be appointed by the church to seek out a suitable pastor and this committee's recommendation will serve as a nomination.
   c) The Pastor's Selection Committee will recommend only one candidate at a time.
   d) The pastor's election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week notice shall be given to the members.
   e) An affirmative vote of three-fourths (3/4) of those present is necessary for a choice.
4. Terms of Service
   a) The chosen pastor shall serve until the relationship is terminated by either his request or that of the church. In either case, at least sixty (60) days' notice

shall be given unless otherwise mutually agreed.

b) There shall be a written mutual contract/agreement made between the pastor and the church.

B. Church Staff

This church shall employ or call staff as it shall need.

1. Staff members other than that of the pastor shall be recommended for employment by an elected personnel committee.
2. A written job description and mutual contract/agreement will be prepared when the need for church staff is determined.

C. Deacons

1. Number, term of office
   There shall be five (5) deacons for the first 100 resident members and one (1) for each additional fifty (50) of portion thereof. Deacons shall be elected for a term of service of three years or longer term of service as voted upon by the church.
2. Qualifications
   a) A church deacon must meet the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
   b) A deacon shall demonstrate an exemplary Christian testimony in private, family, and public life; a committed Christian elder and partner of the pastor; supporter and promoter of the church faith, practice, programs, and ministries.
3. Election
   a) When a deacon vacancy occurs, the chairman of the deacons shall announce that an election of a deacon shall be held during a named church business meeting.
   b) The deacons will enlist active men to be recommended to the church. The duties, qualifications, and importance of the office of a deacon will be interpreted to the candidates and shared with the church prior to the scheduled election of deacons.
4. Ordination
   a) Selection, election, and ordination of deacons is a privilege of the local church.
   b) When ordination of deacons is planned by the church, it shall authorize the pastor to assemble a council to examine the candidates concerning their qualifications to serve as deacons.
   c) The council directed to examine the deacons shall be composed of the pastor, invited ordained pastors in the local association, and deacons of sister Baptist churches.
   d) When the council recommends the ordination of deacons, the ordination service shall be scheduled and led by the pastor.
5. Duties
   a) Elected deacons shall elect the chairman of their committee.

b) Deacons serve in a ministry of encouragement and counsel for the pastor concerning the progress and welfare of the church.
c) Assist the pastor in ministering to the members by implementing a deacon ministry plan.
d) Seek to solve any fellowship problem of the church.
e) Assist the pastor in administering the church ordinances.
f) Serve as church membership committee.
g) In the absence of the pastor, the chairman of the deacons shall serve as an advisory member to all organizations, departments, and committees of the church.

D. Moderator
1. The church moderator may be the pastor or a lay leader elected to this position.
2. The moderator shall preside at all regular and called business meetings of the church.
3. In the absence of the moderator, the chairman of deacons shall preside over the regular and called business meetings of the church.
4. In the absence of the moderator and the chairman of deacons, the church clerk shall call the church to order and an acting moderator will be elected.

E. Clerk
1. The church clerk shall be elected and be responsible for keeping an accurate record of all business meeting transactions of the church and preparing the annual report to the association.
2. He or she shall keep a register of the names and addresses of the church members, with dates of admission, dismissal, dedication of children, and deaths of members of the church family.
3. He or she shall issue letters of dismissal voted by the church and write letters of transfer of membership, prepare written reports of the church, and keep an accurate history of the church.
4. An assistant church clerk may be elected or the clerk's responsibilities shall be delegated to a church secretary if and when the church can afford to employ one.

F. Treasurer
1. The church treasurer shall be elected as the custodian of all moneys of the church and shall disburse these moneys by checks as authorized by the church.
2. He or she shall keep, at all times, an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements and shall render a monthly and annually written report of this account to the church.
3. The treasurer's report shall be audited annually by an auditing committee.

G. Financial Secretary
1. The church financial secretary shall be elected and shall be responsible for seeing that the offerings are properly received, counted, and deposited in the church's bank account.

2. He or she shall properly credit each contributor and their offerings.
3. He or she shall be responsible for preparing for mailing a quarterly or annual record of contribution to donors.

H. Trustees

1. At least three (3) trustees shall be elected by the church to hold in trust the property of the church.
2. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property of the church without a specific vote of the church authorizing each action.
3. It shall be the function of the trustees to sign any, and all legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or lease of church property or any other legal documents requiring the signature of the trustees for and in behalf of the church.

I. Vacancies

In case of vacancy in any office, except that of the pastor and staff members, the vacancy shall be filled by the church at a regular or special meeting as soon as possible after such vacancy has occurred.

III. Church Committees

Church committees shall be formed as needed for successfully accomplishing the mission and purpose of the church. Church committee members shall be elected by the church from nominations presented by a Nominating Committee, and nominations from the floor with the consent of the nominee. All committees shall have a minimum of three (3) members with a chairperson. Any committee member elected to fill any vacancy shall serve the unexpired term of the position vacated. Each committee chairperson shall submit an annual budget request to the Budget and Finance Committee.

IV. Church Meetings

A. Worship Services

The church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning and evening for the worship of God, for preaching, instruction, evangelism, and on Wednesday, or another night, for designated for prayer and Bible study. These meetings shall be open for the entire membership of the church and for all people and shall be conducted under the direction of the pastor or designated church officer in the absence of the pastor.

B. Regular Business Meetings

Regular business meetings shall be held on every first Wednesday of the month. The agenda shall be circulated or made known to the church one week prior to the business meeting. Should there be any unusual meeting or matter of unusual interest to be brought before such regular meeting, notice shall be given to the membership one week prior to that meeting.

C. Special Business Meeting
A special called business meeting may be called by the pastor, and with other church officers, or by action of the church to consider special matters of significant nature. A one-week written notice or announcement must be given for the especially called business meeting.

D. Quorum
The quorum consists of those who attend the business meeting, provided it is a stated meeting or one that has been properly called. At least one-fourth of the members shall constitute a quorum.

E. Parliamentary Rules
*Robert's Rules of Order* (revised edition) is adopted as the authority for parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of the church and for all business meetings of the church and for all other meetings that demand voting of the church members, including committee meetings.

V. Church Discipline

A. Should any unhappy difference arise among members, the aggrieved member shall follow in a tender spirit, the rules given by our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17.
B. Should any case of gross breach of relationship, or of public scandal occur, the deacons shall endeavor to resolve the conflict; and if this effort fails, shall report the case to the church.
C. All such proceedings shall be pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance, but should an adverse decision be reached, the church may proceed to admonish or declare the offender to be no longer in the membership of the church.
D. Any person whose membership has been terminated for any offense may be restored by vote of the church, upon evidence of his repentance and reformation; or if an account of continued absence, upon satisfactory explanation.

Ratified by action of the church in its business meeting on _____.
(date)

Moderator: _____

Church: _____